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This, then, I take it, is the chief obstacle in the way of the bold man who has started a paper in England, if he endeavors to gather his news in the prevalent American fashion. As to the relative values of the two systems of news-gathering—the English, which trusts simply to official sources, and gives the bare facts in all unimportant cases, and the American, which is based on the principle that, under the most apparently commonplace statement may lurk a world of interesting detail, only to be learned by close questioning of all concerned—I shall offer no opinion. I can only say that it seems to me to be a question of news or no news, with the odds in favor of the former.

HORACE TOWNSEND.

V.

TURKISH FREETHINKERS.

THE progress of free thought is not altogether confined to the lands of the North-Caucasian nations. In the cities of Japan, the name of a Buddhist zealot has become a by-word, as odious as "Jesuit" in its latter-day significance, and the private creed of educated Turks is generally a vague theism, strongly tinged with agnosticism. In the bookstores of Constantinople, skepticism in its most pronounced types forms the staple of conversation. The Padisha himself (like Mohammed the Second and the Caliph Al Motadi) is well known to be a rationalist; and a correspondent of the *Pesther Lloyd* describes a soirée at the residence of a Syrian pacha who entertained his guests with anecdotes à la Mary Montagu, quizzing the ulemas and the superstitions of the orthodox peasantry. *Meshdân*—literally an epileptic, a person gaining influence by pretended fits of religious ecstasy—is a sort of freemasonry term which an investigator found to apply to no less a personage than the Prophet himself, and which metropolitan Moslems often use with a chuckling irreverence that would delight the soul of Colonel Ingersoll. "If Mufti Meshdân had revealed the secret of breech-loading six-shooters, instead of his ordinance of six daily prayers," remarked the impious Syrian, "we could still smoke our pipes on the ramparts of Buda, and probably on the Alcazar of Toledo."

A. L. FRANCIS.

VI.

GEOGRAPHICAL DELUSIONS.

THERE is a story of a Spanish artist who decorated the church of his native town with a fresco, depicting the "Siege of Jerusalem," and exhibiting the camp of a Roman army with a battery of heavy siege-guns. That anachronism, however, is matched by the blunder of numerous modern painters, who insist on representing the landscapes of biblical and classic geography with long ranges of treeless mountain-chains; for there is no doubt that up to the beginning of our chronological era the coast-lands of the Mediterranean were covered with magnificent forests. The writings of the ancient classics abound with allusions to the "sylvan solitudes of Arcadia," the "wild beasts of the Numidian forests," the "shaggy woods of Mount Ætna," and the "wood-covered slopes of the Apulian highlands" (the southern Apennines). The Bible speaks of the woods of Bashan and Lebanon, of sacred groves in the land of the Canaanitish idolaters; and even southern Syria teemed with cities and hamlets that can have supported their inhabitants only on a basis of abundant vegetation. The Hebrew synonym of "desert," indeed, means a "wilderness," rather than a sand-waste; and in western Asia and northern Africa, vast territories, now as void of life as the lava-fields of the moon, were once as fertile as the garden-lands of our southern Alleghanies.

The author of "Exile Life in Siberia" has exploded an idea that Asiatic Russia is nothing but a snow-covered steppe; but the "Dying Continent," too, deserves a better opinion. According to the estimates of Professor Bassières, of the Belgian exploring party, Western Africa, south of Lake Tschad, still contains more than a million square miles of almost continuous forests, not to mention the park-like hill-country

of the Orange River and Upper Zambesi, and the vast highland forests of the Atlas range. Nor would it be correct to suppose that climatic considerations would prevent the Mormons from transferring their New Jerusalem to the land of Ham. A few years ago, I met an amateur naturalist who had pursued his zoölogical studies in four different continents, and greatly regretted the reckless pot-hunts that threaten to make North America the least happy hunting-ground of the habitable globe.

"What part of the world would you prefer for a permanent residence?" I inquired.

"Paris, of course," was the good American reply.

"Yes, but outside of heaven?—from a standpoint of physical geography, I mean."

"Well, for sporting purposes, Ceylon is hard to beat," said my cosmopolitan friend, "but the climate of Southern Africa would turn the scales. On Lake Nyassa and in the Western Transvaal, I have seen a hundred successive days of sunshine that could not be matched by the October weather of Southern Switzerland. Even the so-called 'rainy season' up there is dryer than our Indian summer. Our northern winter would horrify a native of that country, as sewer water would disgust a fellow used to the best freestone mountain springs."

FELIX L. OSWALD.

VII.

COUNT TOLSTOI AND HIS CRITICS.

ONE cannot but contrast the half-patronizing tone of those church dignitaries who venture comment on the precept and example of Count Tolstoi, with the tone of former churchmen toward the truth-tellers and truth-actors of their time. It is a question, however, whether the current praise, mingled with mild disparagement, of such, would not change to cries of "crucify him," were there any danger of the world adopting Tolstoi's practice. So many modern chief priests and scribes would be in danger of losing their office that it is doubtful if human nature would be any less vindictive than in the days of Annas and Caiaphas.

Wherein lies the strength of this Russian enthusiast? Not so much in his proclaiming of human brotherhood,—that proclamation may be heard anywhere on the first day of every week,—but in that obliteration of self which, if human brotherhood be a desirable consummation, is the only way to bring it about. Tolstoi's strength is the strength of self-renunciation, that supreme quality which every one is ready to praise, and no one to imitate.

From earliest times, the main line of division between social classes has been the nature of one's employment. Those conditions of employment which most gratify human pride are esteemed the most honorable; those which most mortify human pride are esteemed the least honorable, which last always fall to the weak, the ignorant, and the necessitous. Every one who can, avoids these so-called menial or servile employments. It is because of the struggle to accomplish this that man's inhumanity to man never ends. We may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, minister to the sick, and teach the ignorant ones, in all sympathy; yet as long as we, at the same time, persist in shifting upon them those employments which, as Homer says, take half away the soul, they feel we are not wholly sincere, nor can there be any permanent bond of sympathy between them and us. Human brotherhood is impossible so long as pride reserves to itself anything of that distinction which is based upon difference in employment.

It is this age-long barrier that Tolstoi would break down, by having every one naturally perform a share of those offices which are considered common or unclean, he himself setting the example. The world feels his reproach, but it will not imitate him. Political and social reformers have always recognized the injurious effects, in one way or another, of certain conditions of occupation; but where the old thinkers relegated all such occupations to slaves, the modern thinkers, like Tolstoi, can only make them incumbent, to the extent of his need, upon every individual,—a requirement which the world would go back to slavery before it would accept.

ALFRED H. PETERS.